Caught in the Act

Hooks and uppercuts

THE boys were back in town for the first of two nights at the Birmingham Odeon, and you could almost smell the anticipation in the air, mingling with the odour of well-travelled denim and leather.

Even so, the capacity audience wasn't blind to all but its heroes, and showed a healthy appreciation for the excellent four-piece support group, the Vipers, an Irish outfit who play solid and confident rough-edged pop-rock in much the same manner as the Undertones.

On, then, to the main event: as Lizzy stride purposefully onto the stage, the stalls erupt in a seething mass of bodies, going predictably wild as the lights explode.

"Are you ready, Birmingham?" is a somewhat redundant question, and as the band break into the opener the answer is a resounding yes. "Bad Reputation" hammers home the initial impact, hard and merciless as the band run throughout every pose in the book.

Having formed the opening barrage to their satisfaction, Lizzy pull in the first five numbers from the new album, kicking off with the dynamic "Get Out Of Here." As with much of Lizzy's material, it's basically a straight-hitting pop song dressed up with a hard-rocking edge to appeal to the TOTP audience and the headbangers alike, coming fully equipped with an audience chant line. Gorham and Moore steam along in fine fettle, with Downey pushing the pace behind his kit.

THIN LIZZY
Birmingham Odeon

Another new number, "Do Anything You Want To": it's vintage Lizzy, following the well-trod rhythms and sequences, re-writing the familiar chords to re-arrange the attacking format slightly and yet still sounding as fresh as tomorrow's hangover. It's an obvious single.

Without faltering they melt straight into "Don't Believe A Word," and the response is only measurable on the seisemograph. The single, "Waiting For An Alibi," highlights the distinctive dual lead guitar work, spilling over into "Jailbreak" so that the effect is like a battering by a swift succession of uppercuts.

Back to the new album for "Got To Give It Up," with mournful blues guitar and deliberate vocal phrasing intro before bursting open into a fiery hymn to temperance — hardly auto-biographical, I'd have thought.

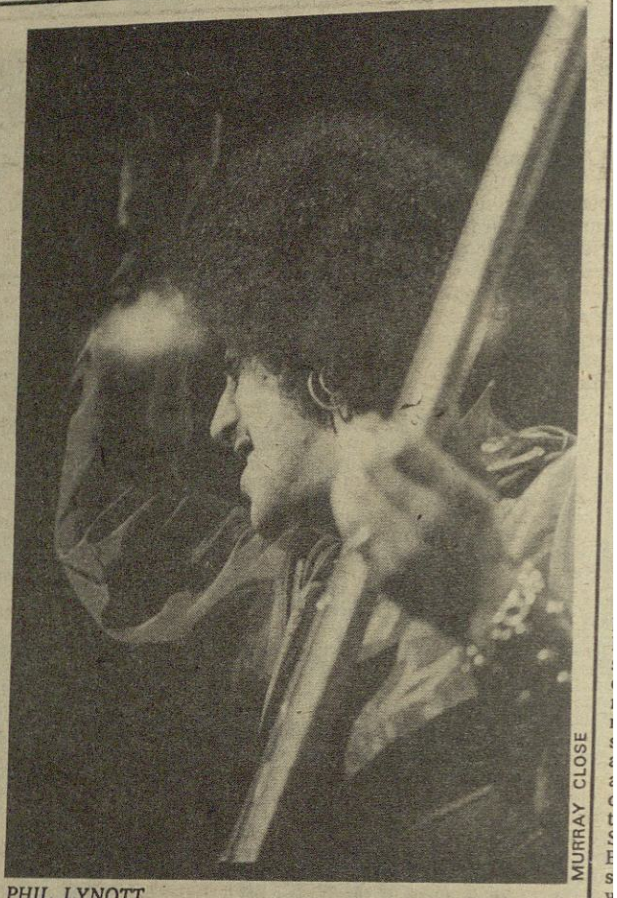
The "Live And Dangerous" epic, "Still In Love With You," takes the pace down into a blues-drenched ballad, featuring some impassioned guitar and bass dueting by Moore and Lynott, and a powerful Gorham solo break.

What follows is destined to become a Lizzy classic. It's the title track from the new album, "Roisin Dubh (Black Rose)," and Lynott marauds into Horslips territory to create an epic number. Lyrically it doesn't hold much, but instrumentally it takes a clutch of traditional Irish melodies and infuses them with the arrogant power of a full electric attack. I managed to identify "Shenandoah" and "Danny Boy" for beginners, but there's more than a couple of Irish reels given the East Of Eden "Jig A Jig" treatment, to devastating effect.

Back to familiar territory with "Cowboy Song" and a vicious version of "The Boys Are Back In Town." Out of the single market and into a solid wedge of hard rocking for "Suicide," leading to the rockabilly bass intro from Lynott for the venemous delivery of "Me And The Boys," which includes a veritable rock hoedown complete with "Oh Susanna" from Moore before encore time.

Back they come, to riotous applause, with a tear-down-the-walls assault on "Rosalee," and then Steve Jones takes a shot at the "Dave Edmunds Special Guest Appearance Award," adding his weight to a full-blooded "Hard Driving Man" and the second encore, the Lizzy rouser "Baby Drives Me Crazy." Theoretically it's all over, but still they return to bow out for the night with a climactic "The Rocker."

What else can be said? These days, and for the foreseeable future, Lizzy transcend criticism. All one can do is pay homage. — **MIKE DAVIES.**



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